

Soul Swap

Story: Soul Swap

Storylink: <https://archiveofourown.org/works/32486935/chapters/80568277>

Category: Re:ゼロから始める異世界生活 | Re:Zero Starting Life in Another World (Anime)

Genre: ---

Author: LittleRunningDemon

Authorlink: <https://archiveofourown.org/users/LittleRunningDemon>

Last updated: 07/19/2021

Words: 14085

Rating: Teen And Up Audiences

Status: Complete

Content: Chapter 1 to 6 of 6 chapters

Source: ArchiveOfOurOwn.org

Summary: On another adventure, in the spa, our favourite gang of knights find out they've swapped bodies. Crazyness ensues.

***Chapter 1*: Prologue**

Jeez, it's freakin' freezing out here. Does Reinhard always have to invite us out when it's cold? Subaru walked down the alley as the cold air nipped at his stubbly chin. Although the knight uniform provided some form of thermal protection, it wasn't designed for below zero temperatures. The last time he felt this numb was when Puck froze him before he got possessed by Petelguese and, well, shattered.

His black reinforced boots, courtesy of Lord Roswaal's fortune, clicked against the stone pavement, the sound echoing across the street. The satisfying crunch of icy leaves reaching his ears, appeasing his broken mind. He reflected back onto the events of the last time Reinhard invited him, Julius and Felix to an outing. He got kidnapped, tortured, escaped, killed himself and then took down a mafia organisation. It was, unique, to say the least.

As he turned the corner onto Turacoverdin Avenue, a dash of red and purple snapped him back to reality, Reinhard and Julius popping into his peripheral vision. Noticing Felix had his back to him, he decided to take advantage of the opportunity. Sneaking up on him, he placed his hand on the unsuspecting Felix's left shoulder.

Felix yelped, jumping a foot into the air and turning to him. His panicked expression quickly softened when he noticed it was Subaru. "Nyah! Subaru-kyun! How did you sneak up on me!?" He lost his cat-boyian accent on the last half, the curiosity eating at him.

Felix had outstanding hearing, and almost a sixth sense. He could easily detect whenever someone was approaching him, the only person who bypassed his sixth sense was Reinhard. But Subaru? That was definitely bizarre. Reinhard hid his smirk as he looked to the floor.

Divine Protection of Prank Cooperation, allows the wielder to grant his own abilities to another in the name of performing a prank.

"Reinhard, what are we doing here?" Subaru asked with a grin still plastered on his face. He glanced up at the rather large sign hanging above the front door of the building they were standing in front of. It was in the toughest glyph, and it was in quite bad handwriting too. But he eventually decrypted it. It was a... Spa?

"I thought we should do some relaxing after everything that has happened. I know that last time I invited you all to do something it ended, strangely. So I asked Lady Felt about it and she suggested this place." Reinhard explained calmly. A smile on his face. Subaru's presence made him feel happy, or, happier. His antics truly tickled his funny bone, as they said back in the 80's.

Subaru nodded in understanding, before snapping his fingers and pointing to Julius. "And why did we invite him?" Subaru didn't actually hate Julius, but for the sake of banter and show-biz, they had to maintain the 'I hate you, you're dead to me' facade. Like siblings, I suppose.

"That's quite rude, Subaru. That's a nice uniform for someone who is a living insult to all knights on the continent." Julius replied, without hesitation. He didn't mean the things he said. He had grown quite fond of Subaru, but for the sake of banter and show-biz, they had to maintain the 'I hate you, you're dead to me' facade. Like siblings, I suppose.

"Ouch, I think me in every parallel universe felt that one." Subaru acted as if he was physically in pain. The remaining three raised an eyebrow each at his words. Parallel universe? What is he talking about?

Reinhard quickly double checked by using his Divine Protection of empathy, just to make sure he wasn't actually in pain.

"Anyway, cyan we head insyide? I'm getting cold." Felix sneezed at the end as if on cue. They all agreed and hurried inside.

"I must admit, this spa is quite relaxing." Julius sighed calmly. They were all currently sitting in a salt-water hot bath. Deciding to keep their dignity intact, they had worn towels around their privates, while Subaru covered his whole body, not wanting for everyone to see the scars on his body.

Not just the self harm ones, but the ones from the Ma-beast incident in the forest. Along with Elsa slicing him in half. And the handprints over his body from a fight with a certain Sin Archbishop.

They all laid their heads back, relaxing in the heat of the bath as it softened their hardened skin. They didn't at all notice the bright glow of the pool.

As they all closed their eyes in unison, they swiftly drifted to sleep.

Reinhard jerked awake. His body felt tense, and smaller. He looked around quickly and noticed he was still in the bath. *I must have fallen asleep.* He leaned forward into sitting position, yawning.

.
.
....

It suddenly occurred to him that he just yawned, and his body did not feel like it should. He looked down at his hands and noticed his skin was a few shades darker than it was before.

Well, this isn't normal, Reinhard thought. He opened his fist and closed it, watching the tendons flex.

It hurt.

That sensation, more than anything, caused Reinhard to experience a first swell of panic. Hurriedly he looked around.

Subaru opened his eyes, leaning forward. Blinking a few times, he was rather quick to notice a few things wrong. To start off, he felt absolutely no fatigue whatsoever, that being muscle and mental fatigue. He also felt stronger, taller, and he could not feel temperature at all.

Looking down at his arms and legs, he noticed that his skin was a few tints paler, and his muscles were a heck of a lot more jacked. *Now, I seriously doubt the water did this to me.*

Glancing up in confusion, he saw Subaru, no, himself sitting across from him.

Reinhard was startling to gain an inkling of what was going on. He was staring at himself, after all. And he was in the body of... "Subaru?"

Subaru blinked, his face contorted into confuzzlement. If he wasn't hallucinating, his own body, which was sitting not even ten feet in front of him, was calling his own name. He quickly glanced around the pool, noticing that Julius and Felix were still there. *Wait, where is Rein-..*

"... Reinhard?!?"

"Yes," Reinhard confirmed. He couldn't tear his eyes away from what had to be Subaru, in his own body. "We appear to have... switched places."

Subaru's eyes widened. *Switched places?! We've literally swapped bodies haven't we.*

He cleared his throat, leaning forward. "Yes, so it would seem." His mouth felt weird. The teeth felt different, so did his voice. His jaw moved differently. His vocal chords vibrated at lower frequency, the whole ordeal felt rather uncomfortable.

To top it off, he really didn't expect that sound to be made when he tried to speak. Of course, it is to be expected when swapping bodies, I suppose.

They both fell into silence, only being interrupted by Felix sneezing. They snapped their heads towards him. Speaking of the catboy, he appeared quite bewildered. He was looking straight ahead in a mix of shock, fear and confusion.

Reinhard and Subaru followed his gaze, finding it to be laid upon their fellow knight, Julius. Something clicked in their heads.

Subaru turned to Felix, examining his face briefly. "Julius?" He called out.

Felix.. Or Julius's head rotated towards him. "Reinhard?" He said.

"No, I'm Subaru." Subaru said.

Julius blinked, looking even more confused. "What?"

"It appears that we've changed bodies."

....

"What?"

"So we've all swapped bodies. How is this possible?" Felix, who was in Julius's body, asked.

"Well I know of a spell in the Yang element which is able to swap people's minds, however I know not of a spell which can reverse it." Reinhard, who was residing in Subaru's body, replied. He still felt strange in his friend's body, but the strangest part was feeling things he normally couldn't. He could feel the air temperature, he could feel fatigue, and tiredness. He felt his stinging eyes, he felt his aching shoulders and legs. It was, very bizarre.

"This is ridiculous, how could Yang magic even do that. I could only think of swapping our souls, but seeing that Subaru, in Reinhard's body, has all of Reinhard's Divine Protections, surely it does something more than that." Julius reasoned, still not entirely accustomed to Felix's small and frail body. He jittered nervously, feeling very vulnerable. Not only was he shorter, he had a lot less muscle mass, and wasn't confident he would be able to defend himself against a simple criminal.

Subaru scratched his chin and spoke up. "Back from where I'm from, we discovered that memories are just electrical currents running throughout neurons in our brains. I'm not sure about consciousness however, but following the previous logic, consciousness could just be a result of the electric currents and signals. So it could be possible to swap only our consciousness, but just taking the memories." He was impressed at himself for having thought of that. But he guessed it was the Divine Protections. He felt.. powerful. Too powerful.

The other three looked at him in bewilderment. "What are you talking about?" Julius asked.

Reinhard fell silent and Felix scratched his new head in thought.

"Actually, although I have no idea what electrical currents are, I trust Subaru on his knowledge of this. He's told me some other things about anatomy, and how to combat bacterial infections and diseases." Felix defended his now-red headed comrade. He was still scratching his head. Or rather, the scratching had turned into just running his fingers

through Julius—no, his purple hair.

“That is true, I recall hearing all the people's talk that a few advancements in medical technology had been made by Subaru.” Reinhard said.

Subaru glanced at the three and sighed. “I don't know if I'm right or not, it's a complete theory. People don't really know what causes consciousness. They've scanned the brain again an-”

“Whether you're right or not doesn't matter. Nor does it matter that we know how it worked. It does not change the fact that we have changed bodies and we need to find some way to get back.” Julius interrupted.

“First off, don't interrupt me asshole.” Subaru stepped towards him and went to poke a finger at his chest, but due to the fact that he's never lived with any Divine Protections before whatsoever, he couldn't control his strength and sent Julius flying across the room.

He flew into a wall at sonic speed, leaving quite a large dent and a few cracks in the stone. Subaru's eyes widened as he just processed what happened. “Oh shit!” He ran towards Julius to make sure he hadn't just killed his ex-purple haired friend.

I just thought of him as my friend... Wait, that is besides the point.

He kneeled next to Julius's body, examining the injuries.

Reinhard sprinted over to help but slipped on the wet tiled floor and hit his head on the floor, a cut forming on the back of his head. Never run around a bath/pool area, kids.

Felix rushed over to Julius's side, looking at the damage. He only smiled as he saw that the injuries had automatically healed themselves. He looked up and saw a confused Subaru, well, in Reinhard's body.

“I've created a fail-safe in my own body in the case that I take fatal damage. That way I can completely revive myself.” He winked.

Subaru nodded and sighed in relief, looking over at Reinhard who was now on the floor. His eyes almost popped out of his head when he saw the blood pouring from Reinhard's head.

“REINHA-”

"ARD!" Subaru visibly flinched, his heart had picked up the pace. But in front of him he saw a frightened Julius and Felix staring at him, while an indifferent Reinhard stares into nothing.

"Are you alright Subaru?" Julius asked. "You told me not to interrupt you then suddenly you started screaming."

Did. Did Reinhard just return by death? Subaru looked up at Reinhard, trying to figure out what he was thinking. Suddenly he could feel what Reinhard was feeling.

What is thi-. Oh right, Divine Protection of Empathy or something. He's feeling confused, a little scared and stressed.

"Are you alright, Reinhard?" Felix asked, placing a hand that he really wasn't used to, on Reinhard's shoulder. He flinched in response, snapping his gaze towards him.

"Uh.. Yeah." Reinhard nodded, not sounding too convincing.

Either way, we must carry on.

"We need to find someway to get back, I can ask Beatrice for her help, surely she can come up with some spell using the science. The only problem is that the Divine Protection that this body has can kinda scare spirits away." Subaru rubbed his neck.

I remember being at that party after my official knighting, Reinhard totally freaked Beatrice out.

"I guess I could ask Beatrice myself." Reinhard suggested.

"I think that for now, the less there are people who know about this, the better." Julius spoke up.

They all nodded in unison.

This is going to be a nightmare.

***Chapter 2*: Chapter One**

The plan was simple. They separated into two teams, partnering up with whom they swapped.

The plan worked well because the Emilia camp had been invited to stay at the Astrea Mansion, mostly because Reinhard and Subaru were buds, and because Reinhard felt like he was indebted to Subaru for last time.

Julius visiting the Crusch manor wasn't unheard of, he'd been there a few times for dinner. So it was no surprise to the workers at the Crusch manor when he showed up.

"Ah, Sir Reinhard, Sir Subaru, you have returned." A maid bowed to them as they entered the manor. Quickly glancing at each other and nodded, they hummed in agreement.

Reinhard, still in Subaru's body, spoke up. "I need to see Gre... Beako. Do you know where she is?"

Subaru felt a strong presence approaching him from the corridor.

"I am right here, I suppose. What does my hopeless contractor want now, I wonder?" A certain Great Spirit of Yin walked up to Reinhard and looked up at him, seemingly expecting something.

Reinhard gulped internally, going through the rehearsal they did earlier. He reached forward and pat her head, forcing a smile. "How could my Beako hurt me like this, I missed you, you know!" He said with a somewhat convincing enthusiasm.

Beatrice melted into his touch, a warm grin appearing on her face. Subaru felt a tang of jealousy in his heart. No one gets to touch his Beako like that but him. But for the sake of not being found out in front of the servant, he kept to himself.

Beatrice pulled away and looked at Subaru, who she, as well as everyone else, thought was Reinhard. She noticed his longing gaze and looked at him suspiciously. "What is it, I suppose?"

Subaru shook his head. "Nothing, Esteemed Great Spirit," he said in a low voice. Damn, this hurt.

Reinhard cringed at his friend's struggles, but the show must go on. "Hey Beako, I have something to ask you, Reinhard needs to come with us." He smiles.

Beatrice sighed and almost stomped her feet. "Why won't you spend time alone with Betty, I wonder? My contractor really knows how to break a maiden's heart, I suppose," she muttered.

They all walked into a private library, where Beatrice spent her day in, and closed the door behind them. As soon as the door was shut, Subaru let his shoulders fall loose while Reinhard stiffened up and sighed in relief.

Imitating someone else is real hard work.

"What is it, I suppose?" Beatrice asked in confusion, seeing the sudden change of character in the two.

Subaru approached Beatrice and wrapped his arms around her. "Oh Beako, it's terrible. We were relaxing in the spa and we fell asleep but when we woke up we had all switched bodies..." Amazing, he didn't even feel out of breathe at the end.

Beatrice ceased her resistance, but pulled away gently. "S-Subaru?" she asked, bewildered. Reinhard's soul had an incredibly high Spirit Affinity, and it was currently messing with her ability to think straight.

Reinhard coughed awkwardly. "I apologise for lying to you Esteemed Great Spirit, but we had to keep it secret. If word gets out that this has happened, bad things could happen."

Beatrice took a few steps back and leaned against a bookshelf. "I suppose that is true. How did this happen, I wonder."

"Reinhard said that it was Yang magic that made us swap bodies. I think I understand the science behind it, so I need your help to create a spell to get us back." Subaru took a deep breath, feeling quite stressed right now. Well, not as stressed as he has been in the past, but still quite stressed.

Beatrice put a thumb on her chin, in thought. "I suppose Yang magic can cause something like this to happen, in fact." She paused and looked at Subaru, who was now red-haired, and several feet taller.

"What do you theorise to be the science behind it?"

Subaru nodded, taking a deep breath. He explained the whole thing, and grinning when he saw a surprised Beatrice with stars in her eyes.

Ah, nothing like spoiling Beako with my otherworldly knowledge, honestly, she has such greed for information. I guess she takes after her mother, that witch.

"So I was thinking, if we're able to swap our memories back, we would essentially be reverted back." He finished, dramatically posing for extra effect.

Beatrice stared at him for one long moment. "It is very odd seeing someone else act like Betty's contractor, in fact," she muttered to herself. She shook her head and her drill-hair bounced. "A memory swap may be possible, I suppose. But Betty does not know any spell to accomplish it off the top of her head, in fact."

"Off the top of your head?" Reinhard echoed. This wasn't a phrase he knew, and he had the sneaking suspicion that its origins would very quickly become his problem.

"A Subaru-ism," Beatrice said. She blinked. "If you are impersonating each other consistently, that may be difficult to copy..."

"Impersonating each other?" Subaru interjected. "You mean you can't just swap us back now?"

He couldn't help but fidget back and forth on the balls of his feet. He didn't know what was up with Reinhard and Return By Death, but it'd be better if the two aforementioned entities were kept far apart.

His death back at the pool has left both Reinhard and Subaru confused, and the latter can't quite figure out his thoughts on the matter. He knew that Reinhard experienced it, because of the way he reacted when he returned by death.

Snapping back to reality, he remembered what his contracted spirit just said. Speaking of the drill-loli.

"I can't just make up a spell on the spot, in fact. You will just have to wait for me to research it, I suppose." She sighed, crossing her arms. This whole situation was ridiculous. Her contractor was possessing a body that she could barely be around without feeling nervous. The person in her contractor's body was someone who really wasn't one to give physical affection.

Damn, she really wanted a Subaru hug right now.

"So then we'll have to impersonate each other," Subaru concluded. He shook his head back and forth. Reinhard's longer hair brushed against his face and he stopped with a frown. "Great."

"Great Spirit Beatrice will surely find a solution soon," Reinhard said. In Subaru's voice it sounded much more pointed than in his own. He hesitated. To Beatrice he said, "Is there anything we can do to help?"

"No, in fact," Beatrice answered. She turned away. "Betty will start her research now. I would rather have this whole dilemma solved quickly, I suppose."

"Me too," Subaru agreed, heartfelt.

Reinhard turned towards him. "Would you like me to lead you back to the Knight's Garrison?" he offered awkwardly. It sounded awkward to Subaru, at least. Subaru knew his own *I don't really know what I'm doing and I don't want to bother with bravado* voice, and that was it.

Oh, of course. Reinhard is on duty this afternoon. Cause why not?

Subaru sighed and rubbed his face with his now over-sized hands. "Alright, sure. You are gonna have to explain to me what I'm supposed to do though."

Reinhard nodded. "It is quite simple, you just have to—"

"Not right now! On the way there!"

They walked out of the library, letting Beatrice do her research and create a spell to revert them back to their bodies. Turning the corner of the corridor, Reinhard turned recklessly and walked straight into Emilia.

The problem here though, is that Reinhard had realised he was walking into her halfway, and tried to stop. But due to the fact that he couldn't detect her presence beforehand, nor was he anywhere near as fast without his divine protections. He tripped.

He landed face first into Emilia's bosom. Subaru looked on in horror as Reinhard fulfilled one of his life dreams. Reinhard fell to the floor, face first, while Emilia turned beet-red and stuttered.

"U-um. Sir Reinh... Sir Reinhard, I thank you for your... I thank you for your hospitality." She managed to say as Reinhard slowly got up from the floor, rubbing his nose in minor discomfort.

Subaru gaped at Reinhard. Reinhard brushed himself off. He too was looking rather red in the face. Still he managed to look at Subaru pointedly.

"Yup," Subaru said in a very Reinhard-accurate way. He cleared his throat. "I mean," *Channel your nerdery, Subaru!* "tis no bane on my, uh, um..."

Wait, what was he saying? This was Reinhard! Subaru could do this! "No, thank you, L-Lady Emilia," Subaru said as grandly yet nicely as he could muster. "Subaru and I shall be going to the Knight's Garrison, right after Subaru *apologizes for besmirching your honor.*"

That last bit was accompanied by a completely in-character Reinhard death-glare. Totally in character. Subaru was doing great at this.

Deactivating his Divine Protection of death glares, Subaru turned back to Emilia, giving a soft smile.

Reinhard stuttered a bit on his own words, his face seemingly getting redder and redder. After a small while, he managed to finally get a grasp on the Lugnic language once more. "I-I apologise. La.. Emilia-tan." He racked his brain desperately to try and find a Subaru-ism to add at the end, but could not think of anything.

Subaru smirked, and shook his head in amusement. "Anyway, we shall be departing. Subaru will escort me to the Knight's Garrison and will be back shortly. I believe he wanted to spend the afternoon to help you with your speech at the event at the end of the week." He grinned.

That is what you get for being reckless, Reinhard.

The effect was instantaneous, Reinhard turned the brightest shade of red the human brain could even think of. Subaru chuckled and slapped his hand onto his shoulder. "Let's go, Subaru."

Walking down the corridor, they left Emilia to resume whatever she was doing beforehand. Looking at them walking down the corridor, her face turned confused as she thought to herself. ' *What was that about? Subaru was acting.. Strange. Well, stranger than usual. He's always like this when something's going on. I have to ask him and make sure everything is okay.* '

As soon as they were out of sight, Subaru's knightly chuckles turned into full-blown evil-laughter. In Reinhard's voice, it was the worst thing the world had ever experienced.

"Subaru," said Reinhard pitifully. Unfortunately for him, without his Divine Protection of Puppy Eyes, he had no power against Subaru.

Still the word was enough to remind Subaru of their position. He sobered immediately, turning to look at Reinhard in his body.

Subaru knew he could choose the hard path, here. He could choose to broach the topic of Return By Death, and in this unique situation he may even be able to talk about it. Finally, he may have a way to share his many, many struggles. Finally, he could have a true confidant.

Or Subaru could just mock Reinhard. That would work too.

...

He thought about it, mocking Reinhard was the best course of action. He'd come this entire time without confiding in anyone, he could go a little further.

This is, unless, Reinhard talks to him about it. If he did talk to him about it, then he had a lot of stories to tell. And it will be nice to finally vent his frustrations to.

By the time he had come back to reality from his thoughts, they were already outside. As if on cue, Reinhard stated the obvious. "I should probably explain to you what you have to do for the next four hours."

"Yeah, no shit Reinhard." He clicked his tongue. "Sorry, I don't know where that came from."

Reinhard eyed him. "You seem a little stressed, Subaru," Reinhard said delicately. Well, Subaru assumed that was what *delicate* sounded like in his own voice. He'd never quite managed it. "Is there something you'd like to talk about?"

Subaru eyed him back. "The body-swapping thing is a bit stressful, yeah." *Something else you're trying to say, Reinhard ?*

Reinhard smiled in a way that was supposed to be reassuring. "Perhaps it'd be less stressful if you shared some tips for me to act like you." His voice turned wry. "That way, you won't have to worry about me ruining your reputation once more."

Subaru squinted at him. He genuinely couldn't tell whether Reinhard was insinuating something about Return By Death. Curse Reinhard's superior communication skills! "For one," Subaru started, salty, "don't talk that good."

Reinhard blinked. "Yes, Subaru, I'll try my best not to talk too good."

Subaru crossed his arms. "I can't tell if you're mocking me," he informed Reinhard haughtily.

"I'd never mock anyone," Reinhard promised, blinking more.

"If you're trying to activate a divine protection with all that blinking, it's not going to work." Subaru coughed. They were getting off track. "Anyways," he said. "Mimicking me... Do you know any of my Subaru-isms?"

Reinhard paused, scratching the back of his head. "I cannot say that I do. Please, enlighten me."

Subaru sighed. "First off, stop speaking like that. Speak as if you don't really care about the social hierarchy. Also, you need to sound very enthusiastic about it all. Use a lot of body language, wave your hands as you speak. But not too much."

Reinhard mentally took note of it all, nodding as he went along. Subaru was just about to start again when they both realised they were standing in front of the Knight Garrison.

"Ah, frick. Just say weird things, it'll probably sound normal coming from my body." Subaru admitted. "Right, so I just have to check in and patrol, yes?"

Reinhard nodded again, noticing that his neck was starting to get sore. "Yes. And I will try to keep your advice in mind."

Subaru nodded this time. "Okay good, just try to spend some time with Beako, she gets lonely. Don't forget to tease her. Also, when you're with Emilia-tan." Subaru paused and approached Reinhard, staring him down threateningly. "If you do anything to her, I will kill you. I do not care if you're the Sword Saint. I'll destroy Od Laguna if I have to."

Reinhard nodded, taken aback. "Of course," he managed after a few seconds. His voice came out startlingly rough.

Subaru stepped back, satisfied. "The mansion's that way," he said, pointing and then gesturing. "Go, shoo."

"Hopefully I'll see you shortly," Reinhard said with a dip of his head. Then he turned and started walking away.

It wasn't a long walk by any means, but as soon as Reinhard started walking he found himself wishing he could be back at the mansion already. Something was wrong, beyond this whole body-swap situation. Something was going on here, with Subaru, and Reinhard selfishly would rather dwell on the complications of impersonating someone else than whatever it was that had happened shortly after their bodies had been swapped.

Yet Reinhard could not stop his mind from drifting to—

To—

There was something in Reinhard's back.

He moved his arm back and then the pain started. It was like nothing Reinhard had ever experienced. It was a sick sensation—something hot was creeping through his guts, his stomach, his torso—

Reinhard had never felt so warm.

So cold.

He was so cold.

And now he was on his knees, and then he fell forwards onto his face.

Slowly he managed to turn himself—to look up—oh how it hurt—

“This feels too easy,” said a voice, distant and ringing at the same time. There was cotton in Reinhard’s ears. If the voice said anything else, it was lost under that roaring—under the feeling of blood pulsing out of Reinhard—he was so cold—

It hurt. It hurt. Reinhard died.

And it happened so quickly, yet so slow. He felt nothing yet everything. The freezing hot pain in his back, and the warmth of his body leaving him.

His vision faded to darkness, and he died. So, why was he standing here.

Why is here standing in front of the Knight Garrison, next to Subaru.

Why was Subaru staring at him like that, as if he just witnessed a murder.

What is happening.

***Chapter 3*: Chapter Two**

In the Crusch manor

Julius, who currently possessed the brown haired catboy's frail body, sat at a desk, in the grand library. Sitting across from him, Felix, in our favourite purple haired knight's body, had his nose in a book.

They've been researching Yang magic and its effects on the mind for the past few hours, and they haven't made any progress. Crusch had one of the best collections of Magical Research books, due to her being a militarist.

So far they've been able to discover that Yang magic can duplicate items, improve them. It can also buff people, by boosting their speed, strength and other aspects of their body. Felix was sure that if he cooperated with Subaru's semi-suspicious and extensive knowledge on human anatomy, and if he could get a few Yang magic users into their camp, they'd make some invincible soldiers.

Felix recalled Subaru explaining to him about metabolism. The faster your metabolism works, the faster your body and mind works. God damnit, if Subaru was here he was sure he could find a solution to this.

Then again, it was probably best he'd accompanied Reinhard to see Beatrice, the Great Spirit of Yin. Reinhard isn't really that good of an actor, and Subaru is one hell of a character to play.

The now purple haired knight looked up to see his comrade, in his own body. "Any luck?" He asked, hoping that by pure chance they found something.

Julius sighed and shook his head. "Nothing, only an extension onto Duplication magic. It says that it can duplicate items in an even better condition than they were before by casting two spells at once. What about you?"

Felix rubbed his temples. "Same here, nothing. This chapter is on how you can create a link between a Yin and Yang user, letting them know where each other are at all times."

Julius nodded and hummed. "Oh, that's like what me and Subaru did after the White Whale hunt."

Felix sighed. He wanted a break, and he was sure Julius did too. He did a quick flip over the pages to see how much he had left, and screamed internally at the hundreds of pages that..... weren't there. There was just nothing on switching people's minds.

Just before reverting back to the page he was on, his eyes were caught on a specific page. *Deconstruction? I guess it's the opposite of Duplication magic. Ah I'll take a look after a small break.*

Felix stood up, stretching his arms and legs. "I'm going to fetch some tea, and visit the bathroom. I'll be back in a few minutes." He left after a prompted nod from Julius.

Wandering the hallways to get to the bathroom, his mind couldn't help but backtrack onto the Deconstruction page. *Hm, something is bugging me about that. Ah, I'll think about it later.*

He turned the corner and realised he wasn't entirely sure where he was going. *That's... Strange. I know this place off the back of my hand... Oh right, third door on the left.*

He entered the bathroom, unzipped his fly and started doing his business. He noticed some differences between his own body and Julius's, which he honestly wasn't proud to admit. Some things were bigger, like his thigh muscles. Some things longer, like his legs. And some things thicker, like his bulging calf muscles.

Finishing his business, he zipped up his fly, when it suddenly hit him. Deconstruction magic, Duplication magic. Following Subaru's logic, memories are electrical currents passing through brain cells. Now, Felix didn't know what electrical currents were, nor did he know about brain cells.

However, Subaru's brief explanation of them helped him with an epiphany. His said electrical currents are the flow of electrons—again, Felix had no idea what that was. But what did help is that it can stimulate certain cells.

Electricity would flow through the brain cells, and Subaru called these specific ones as Neurons, in a specific pattern which would then be saved as a memory. Later on, electricity flowing through those same Neurons would remind the person of said memory.

If these cells were what Subaru described as: 'imagine really small pieces of paper, with written instructions on what they do. The cells will follow these instructions, like small people I guess.' - then Felix can come to the conclusion that these cells are physical entities. And if like Subaru said, consciousness could likely be the result of memories, then...

"I SOLVED IT!"

He ran out the bathroom, sprinting down the corridors in his new body. *Deconstruction magic for the win!*

They must have duplicated the memories—or the electric patterns—while we slept, and then used deconstruction magic to destroy the initial memories or patterns. That way it completely swapped our memories! Resulting in our consciousness swapping, and for us it seemed like we swapped. When in reality, we're still the same person, just different memories!

It was an incredibly versatile spell. If Felix weren't the victim of this spell, he'd be eager to investigate it further and perhaps test it on someone else.

He slammed open the door to the library, calling out for Julius. Panic rose when Felix saw that he wasn't there.

Well, that wouldn't have made him panic, but when it was combined with the bloody knife on the floor, along with blood dripping onto the carpeted floor—Yeah. Panic.

OH GOD OH FU-.. Okay! I need to act like Julius! What would he do in this situation!?

Trying to act knightly, he slowed his breathing and tried to calm his head. Swallowing his panic attack, he decided to follow the blood trail. His heart kept beating rapidly, a sense of unease seeped into his stiff spine. Were he in his own body, his ears would be flat.

Were he in his own body, Felix surely would have heard this attack. He would've heard it, and Julius would've been able to fight off any attackers.

There was nothing Felix could do about it now, though, besides squinting his eyes for the trail of blood and cursing his inferior sense of smell.

The blood eventually led to a window, which was currently open. Rushing over, he looked outside. At first he saw nothing, but in the distance he saw a familiar looking cloak carrying an unconscious catboy.

He panicked once more, unsure of what to do. Looking around and biting his lip, he searched for something that would tell him what to do.

A sudden flashback to earlier, before they'd split up, invaded his senses.

"There are several kinds of memories. You have muscle memory, and normal memory. Normal memory is things like taste, things we like, the music we like, and a joke someone told us. But muscle memory is for things like writing, eating, walking, running. Even swinging a sword is in muscle memory.

I'm not entirely sure how it triggers, but it should come naturally. Think of it like breathing, you kind of do it automatically until you think about it, then you have to manually inhale and exhale."

Subaru has frantically explained the different kinds of memories that existed. He'd also talked about something like traumatic memory, but Felix had already stopped listening to his tangent by then, distracted by the insinuations of this new information.

If things like fighting and running are in muscle memory, then it would explain why I couldn't find the bathroom without thinking about it! Alright! If it's as natural as breathing, I got this!

It suddenly occurred to him he was watching the cloaked figure run away with Julius in tow, while Felix stayed at the window not really doing anything. He quickly got back on track and started sprinting throughout the mansion, making sure to concentrate on his route.

An idea—one strangely seated, like it was its own form of muscle memory—in his head. *The Spirits!*

As if on cue, 'his' contracted quasi-spirits materialised in front of him. "Hey guys! I'm gonna need some help!" He took a pause to round a corner. "There's a man in a white and blue cloak currently kidnapping my good friend Felix! Care to lend me a hand?"

Through his spirit affinity he could sense a sort of 'what do you want us to do about it' response. Felix couldn't help but feel a bit hurt. He knew the spirits didn't intend to phrase it that way, it sounded like they didn't care about him—or what they thought was him—being kidnapped.

Stop distracting myself! What can they do? Hmm. Wait! The book talked about creating a link between a Yin and Yang magic user. If I can get Julius's Yin and Yang spirit to link to each other, one of them can stay with Julius, and the other can lead us to him! Alright, let's do this!

"In, Nes, I need you two to create a link with each other. Afterwards, Nes, I want you to stay with Felix, and hide in his pocket or something. Just make sure you're not detected! In, stick with me, and lead me to him!"

The two spirits seemingly nodded, that is, if they had heads. Instead they just kind of bobbed up and down. A flash of white light erupted between the two before Nes sped off, likely to get to Julius.

Damn, that was easier than I expected it to be, Felis thought, putting on a burst of speed.

Finally making it out of the mansion, he ran into none other than Wilhelm Van Astrea. *Old man Will! He can help me!*

He rushed towards him, panting from the exertion of running. "Old man W-.." *Wait, act like Julius!* "Sir Wilhelm! May I request your assistance?"

Wilhelm eyed him up and down, raising an eyebrow. He lowered himself into a shallow bow. "How may I be of service, Sir Julius Juukulus?"

Felix regained his breath. "It's Felix." He paused, seeing Wilhelm straighten up and tense. "Someone's kidnapped him!"

He saw the butler's eyes widen to the point where they could have popped out of his skull.

"Well don't just stand there! Let's go!" Wilhelm almost yelled, determined to rescue his demi-human furry friend.

Felix almost smiled. *This is a much better reaction. Not that that's what's important here.* "Very well, In! Take us there!"

***Chapter 4*: Chapter Three**

Reinhard fell to his knees, his eyes red as tears flowed from his eyes. He had no idea what just happened, but it was the exact same as when he 'died' in the Spa. He came back, but before.

Subaru rushed over to him, kneeling down and putting his hands on Reinhard's shoulders. "Reinhard? What just happened? Are you alright?" His face was painted with concern, and worry.

Reinhard looked into Subaru's eyes, wondering why. What just happened, what did he just witness?

"You're not him.. You're not my Subaru." A cold dark voice echoed through the endless void.

Reinhard tried to look around, but he had no eyes. He had no body, no ears. It's like only his mind existed here.

"Where is Subaru? What have you done?" The voice echoed through the corners of his mind, he felt fear, panic.

"Reinhard!" Subaru snapped him back to reality. He glanced around quickly, verifying his surroundings. He wasn't quite sure where he was after he had been stabbed, but by god he does not want to go back there.

Noticing he's still in Subaru's body, and Subaru being in his, he began wondering who it was that spoke to him.

"Reinhard?" Subaru called once more.

Reinhard looked up into his eyes, opening his mouth to speak, but closing it once more. What should he say. 'Hey I've just been stabbed'?. He didn't want to sound crazy. Then again, Subaru was the very definition of crazy.

"I... I was walking down the street, and... I felt this pain in my back. It hurt, so much." Reinhard shivered at the memory of the icy pain he felt in his lower back. In his Sword Saint body he couldn't feel pain, and it was a relatively new sensation to him. It terrified him.

Subaru sighed and pulled Reinhard into a hug, which caught him off guard. He didn't ask him what he was doing, cause he had a feeling Subaru didn't know either.

"What happened next?" Subaru asked, patting his back. He quickly looked around, noticing they were in an alley just next to the Knight Garrison. Content that no one was watching them, he continued.

"I.. Everything was black, and this voice spoke to me. It was so cold, and dark." Reinhard carried on, stopping to sniff.

“And before I know it, I’m back here.”

Subaru pulled away and scratched the back of his head and sighed. “Reinhard, I am about to do something crazy. It might work, or it might not.”

Seeing Reinhard nod, he continued. “Reinhard, I can return by death.” He shut his eyes, waiting for the inevitable pain to come. Sensing that it hadn’t arrived, he opened one eye, seeing everything as it was.

Reinhard raised an eyebrow in concern. “Return by d-” He wanted to ask but was cut off by time completely freezing. He noticed a black hand appearing from nowhere, approaching him. He could feel panic in his brain, but he couldn’t move anything but his eyes.

The heart phased through his chest, towards his heart. Time resumed and Reinhard felt an overwhelming pain in his chest.

Subaru yelled a few profanities, pulling Reinhard towards him and placing his index and middle finger on Reinhard’s neck. The Sword Saint wasn’t quite sure what his friend was doing, but it felt relaxing.

Subaru sighed in relief. “Your heart is still beating, that is good news. Don’t say return by death under any circumstances. I imagine the only reason I can say it is because Od Laguna is keeping you alive, I guess?”

Reinhard nodded, it seemed to make sense. But what the hell was Return by Death.

Sensing Reinhard’s confusion, Subaru continued explaining. “When I die, I get sent back to a certain point in time. I have no control over when I end up, but it has been both a blessing and a curse in the past.”

Reinhard’s eyes widened as his mouth hung open. He couldn’t exactly say Subaru was lying, as he just witnessed his power first hand.

Thinking about it, it made a lot of sense. Subaru knowing things he shouldn’t have, his impeccable timing. How he brought down the White Whale and the Sin Archbishop of Sloth, and supposedly slaying the Great Hare.

Of course he succeeded, he couldn’t lose. Everytime he failed he got sent back, to try again. But it came at a price.

Having to die to do it is a bit extreme. Reinhard has only died twice, and it nearly drove him insane. It was traumatic, and he never wanted to do it again. He never wanted to feel pain again. He never wanted to feel hot or cold again.

Oh, but wouldn’t that be a death of its own? A sanitized life—it’d be the same as those final few moments of nothingness

There was no way out then, was there? It was all or nothing, and both were awful.

Subaru was still talking, and Reinhard could barely hear him. He had to listen.

"It's pretty wild, isn't it?" Subaru was saying. "And I think it's because of Satella, or something—oh, that's a bit of a taboo name, isn't it, oops, my bad—"

Not only was Subaru talking, but he was always desperately buttonmashing. Well, as close to buttonmashing as one could get when the buttons were divine protections and one's hand was their mind. Or soul? Subaru didn't really know, and at this point he didn't really care.

Fuck, Reinhard looks super out of it, Subaru thought desperately. Divine Protection of Lasagna Making? Why isn't there anything useful in here?

Here! Something in Subaru's mind clicked. *These are the emotion-y ones! Divine Protection of Empathy—no thanks, we'd be stuck in an anxious feedback loop.* He swiped through them—and wasn't it weird, that that was the terminology he was using—and finally found one he liked.

Divine Protection of Memory Sharing, don't fail me now.

Doing the real life equivalent of left clicking, his vision suddenly darkened. Trying to look around, he could see nothing but everything at the same time. It felt kinda like the shadow garden

Oh, this must be my own mind. Alright, let's see how this works. Do I just think of a memory?

Suddenly, hundreds of scenes appeared in front of him. He was suddenly given a body, and he could move forward.

Walking in a random direction, he noticed that each scene was painted on a crystal-like screen. Looking closer, each scene was a different memory.

Continuing his walk, he saw one memory which made him freeze in fear and anxiety.

Before him, he could see Rem being held several feet in the air by Unseen Hands. Her limbs were being twisted while her bones crunched in fatal manners.

Tears began to form at his non-existent eyes, he approached it, reaching his hand out. "Rem... Rem." He croaked. It had been so long since he saw her anywhere but in bed, asleep.

His hand touched the crystal, and suddenly everything flashed white.

He came back to reality, noticing his hand on Reinhard's shoulder, who was seemingly zoned out.

Subaru gasped, realising what he just did. *Oh shit oh shit oh shi-*

Subaru tugged at the chains binding him to the cave walls. His screams of rage echoed throughout the cavern as Petelguese continued to torture Rem in front of him

Rem... What happened to you... I remember you.. Subaru said you were... Are.. Ram's sister... ? Why am I...?

Petelguese's insane cackles filled his ears, making blood-hot anger boil inside him. "PETELGUESE!!! I WILL KILL YOU!!" Subaru kept barking at him

When is this? Petelguese.. That was the name of the Sin Archbishop of Sloth. But I thought Subaru could see his unseen hands.

Minutes passed as it continued. Rem being twisted in inhuman ways, while Petelguese laughed as Subaru screamed his lungs out.

No... this never happened. I'm... I'm Subaru, here. I'm not Subaru.

Just before leaving, Petelguese approached Subaru, grinning maniacally, inches from his face. "Your own sloth did this, believer in love. Soon, the ordeal will be upon us!" He laughed crazily once more.

This... couldn't have happened.

"I hope you starve soon, goodbye, Natsuki Subaru!" Petelguese's voice got quieter and quieter as his footsteps echoed throughout the cave.

No, why is this—

Tears flowed down Subaru's eyes, his vision being blurred by the water.

why—

And it blurred and it blurred and it blurred, and the echoes of Petelgeuse's footsteps grew until they weren't echoes at all and simply a ringing, inescapable silence.

...

It was broken only by the heaving gasps of Rem as she pulled herself forwards. Seconds was measured in her every twitch. Minutes by her breaths. Hours by her slow creep towards Subaru as he watched her, helpless and pathetic and insultingly whole.

And then Rem was close enough to touch. And then she was touching him. And then she was breaking his chains and falling to the ground.

He couldn't tell if she was alive. For a moment, he didn't want to know. For a moment, he just wanted to lie next to her.

For far longer than that, he thought *there's no coming back from this*.

And then Subaru woke up.

The almost-shadow garden shivered, static-like, around him, and then shattered. Subaru was back on the street, right in front of the Knight's Garrison and across from the Little Demon running store.

"Oh, *shit*," Subaru said, looking down at Reinhard, who was openly sobbing.

He patted Reinhard on the back a few times and Reinhard just cried harder. "Sorry," Subaru said. "That, uh, wasn't what I meant to do." He attempted a lighter tone. "These things should come with warnings."

He waited for Reinhard to answer, but he didn't. "Reinhard..?" He placed his hand on his shoulder.

Reinhard kept silent, the only noise he produced was the sobs and sniffles. What he had just witnessed was not something most people could handle.

Subaru gritted his teeth in panic. *Nice one Subaru! You've fucked it up!*

He would've tried to comfort him further, but a swift rustling noise behind him, and a strong sensation in his gut, made him jump to his feet.

Turning around, he saw three men in blue and white cloaks. His eyes widened as he recognised them. *The Ninth Tail?!*

Without a second of hesitation the three charged at him. He was caught off guard, but time seemed to slow. Well, time slowed down, but not him. He walked forward, punching one of them in the stomach.

The one in the middle was sent flying back across the alley. Subaru's eyes widened at his strength, once more having underestimated the power of the Sword Saint.

When he thought about it, he had no idea how he just triggered that Divine Pro-... *Oh! Muscle memory!*

Grinning, he looked at the other two, who were both running really slowly towards him. Wanting to test a bit more of his power, he kicked off the wall, soaring through the air until he tackled the one on the left to the ground.

The hooded man's head shattered against the ground, a bone crunching noise reverberating in his ears. Turning his head to the last one, he swept his leg under his feet, making him fall to the floor.

However once again he used too much force, making the cultist flip way too fast, causing his face to smash into the floor. His head exploded from the impact.

Subaru's eyes widened slightly at the scene he just witnessed. *Ew, that is gross.*

Time went back to normal, the air blew against his face once more. He turned around, expecting to see the crying Reinhard that he left there.

Panic seeped into his mind as he saw he wasn't there. He was in fact at the end of the long alley, being carried by another man cloaked in white and blue.

He activated his Divine Protection of Swiftiness and tried to catch up, but no matter how fast he ran he just couldn't catch up. *God damnit! Is there not some better Divine Protection of Swiftiness or something? What the fuck, I thought I was supposed to be Reinhard?!*

Subaru lengthened his strides— *c'mon, Reinhard's body, don't fail me now!* —and promptly ran headfirst into a slab of solid muscle.

“—Reinhard?” gasped out Wilhelm, sprawled out on the ground.

"Wilhelm!" Subaru yelled, scrambling off of Wilhelm and dusting off Reinhard's fancy knight uniform. *Yes! He can help! And— Subaru spun around, Felis in Julius' body is here too!*

"Did you guys see any Ninth Tail members?" Subaru blurted, helping Wilhelm up absently. "They snatched—uh, they kidnapped Subaru while I was looking away."

Felis squinted at Subaru. Subaru's dislike of Julius instantly reared its head. Unbeknownst to him, Felis too found himself suddenly found himself resisting the urge to banged.

"I was looking away for good reasons," Subaru clarified, trying not to sound petulant.

Felis sighed. He'd judge, but he had no room to. "Ju—Felis was kidnapped as well."

Subaru straightened. "Shit!"

Wilhelm cleared his throat, having grown fed up with all this. Subaru and Felis both turned to him. "Have you four somehow swapped consciousnesses?" Wilhelm asked politely.

Subaru and Felis exchanged glances. "Yeah," both admitted at once.

Wilhelm sighed. "Alright," he said, massaging his temples. His old bones and old brain weren't meant for this. "Will this disrupt the rescue attempts?"

"No," Subaru and Felis chorused once more.

Felis took over. "Our, ah, muscle memory will suffice," he explained.

Wilhelm nodded, businesslike. "We'll stop dawdling, then." He turned and broke into a run, heading in the direction that the Ninth Tails Cultists had vanished to.

Without hesitation, Felis and Subaru followed.

***Chapter 5*: Chapter Four**

Julius's eyes shot open. A cold feeling covered his body. Everything was very bright, and his eyes slowly adapted to the light. His clothes were heavy and his hair felt wet—he had been drenched in water.

In front of him were two men in cloaks, coming clearer into focus as his vision sharpened. One of them held a now-empty bucket, while the other held a tray full of various tools. Looking closer, he noticed they were mostly tools for torture.

He tried to stay calm, observing the room. It looked like he was in some basement, almost like a dungeon. Several bright lightstones hung from the ceiling on chains. The stone walls were damp, and completely shielded him from outside light.

He could most likely scream his lungs out, and no one would hear him.

His eyes slowly wandered back to the cloaked figures. He tried to swallow his fear, but panic rose into his chest. Usually he was quite composed, but something about being in Felix's body worried him immensely.

His eyebrows furrowed, and his mouth hung open. Finally mustering up the courage, he tried to speak, but his voice was croaky and his mouth was dry. "What.. Do.. You.. Want.. From me..?"

His throat hurt, so much. It felt like he'd swallowed sand paper, or someone had made him swallow shattered glass.

The cloaked figures seemingly looked at each other, then back at Julius. One of them nodded. The other one sped off so fast that Julius could barely see him move. It looked almost like he'd teleported. Julius guessed that only having Felix's heightened senses allowed him to notice it.

Realising Julius wasn't going to get an answer, he looked around for a way out. He was on a chair, with his hands tied behind his back with rope. His feet were bound together, meaning running would be difficult.

It occurred to him that although his hands were tied, he wasn't in any way tied to the ground nor the chair, and that he could move somewhat freely.

Constructing a plan in his head, he decided he'd wait until the cloaked figure had his back turned. Once this had happened, he would jump forward and use his teeth to bite his opponent's neck. If his bite was enough to neutralise him, he'd use some of the tools to cut his ties loose.

Relying on the fact that a single bite would be enough was quite risky. But it was all or nothing in this situation, he had no choice.

Feeling his heart beat faster, he did some breathing exercises, breathing in and out slowly. When he was sufficiently calmed, he looked up at his captor. He appeared to be sharpening some tools, with his back to him.

Doing a small once over in his head, he stood up very slowly. Making sure not to make too much noise, he put his feet in position to leap forward. Feeling the contraction in his thighs, he threw himself towards his enemy.

Time seemed to slow, which Julius concluded as a result of Felix's superior demi-human reflexes. He was quite surprised at how fast and far he was travelling, not realising just quite how strong Felix's body was.

He reached the cloaked figure's neck, biting down hard. He felt his teeth sink through the flesh, meeting each other halfway through. It occurred to him that he just bit a large portion out of this man's neck. Felix was insanely stronger than he should be.

Then again, he was a demi-human, and adrenaline is one hell of a drug. It's even more powerful than cocaine.

He unclenched his jaw and hopped backwards, making sure not to trip on his own feet. He gazed at the man who had now fallen to the floor, both his hands gripping his neck as his body spasmed.

Julius quickly turned his back to the tray, picking up a scalpel with his hands behind his back, and cutting his binds. Once his hands were free, he moved to his ankles.

Now that he was completely unbound, he examined the cloaked figure on the floor. He was unmoving, most likely dead from blood loss. He quickly took a small dagger from the tray and left the room, hoping to escape.

He stepped out the door, seeing a long hallway. It stretched out in both directions, both equally as long, and almost identical in visuals. He felt like he was trapped in a labyrinth.

The hallways were quite bland, devoid of any colour or decorations. A lightstone hung from the ceiling every few metres, illuminating the dark grey floor and walls. It seemed to stretch on infinitely without a single turn or corner.

Looking both ways, as if checking the traffic to cross the road, he tried to think of which direction to go. He had no idea where he was, and there were most likely more cloaked figures ready to kill him if they saw him outside of the dungeon.

Julius took a deep breath and sighed, bringing his unoccupied hand to his forehead and rubbing it. *What the hell do I do now? If I just aimlessly wander about then I'll most likely get myself killed. No matter how strong this body may be, there's no way I could fight one of them fair and square. The only reason I succeeded just now was due to surprise.*

Before he could sink further into despair, he heard distant yelling. He hid back in the room, closing the door until only a small gap remained between the frame and the door.

The yelling, now combined with several sets of footsteps, approached him. He made sure he was breathing quietly, and that he was not within the field of view of anyone passing by. Just to make sure, he gently pressed a small button on the wall, which deactivated the lightstone.

The room fell into darkness.

The yelling got closer, and it turned from an unintelligible scream into more of a sob. As it approached, he realised it was Subaru who was sobbing.

Well, it wasn't Subaru, it was most likely Reinhard. *But what could have possibly been so intense as to make Reinhard cry? I've never even seen him tear up.*

The sobbing and the footsteps were right by Julius, now. He could wait, or move now.

Better to move now. Julius had no idea what was making Reinhard sound like that, but it couldn't be good.

The light seeping through the space between the frame and door flickered and the door creaked open.

A cultist stood there, struggling with Reinhard, who had gone completely limp.

Julius again lunged forward. He kicked the cultist in the stomach and they wheezed. He pressed his advantage, stabbing them with the knife and pulling it out and stabbing again, and again.

Blood spurted. Julius could taste it in his mouth even as it fell nowhere near him.

The cultist fell to the floor. Julius stabbed them a final time, right at the base of the skull.

He looked up. "Reinhard?"

Reinhard had gone silent. He was staring vacantly, slumped against the doorway. The blood from the cultist was creeping towards him in an ever-growing pool.

"Reinhard?" Julius repeated, stepping towards him. He slipped the knife back into the folds of Felix's dress. *He looks out of it.*

Julius knelt beside Reinhard. "Hey," he said, soft and coaxing. Felix's voice slipped into something soothing with barely any effort on Julius' part. "What's wrong?"

"I..." Reinhard croaked. His hollow eyes dragged up to meet Julius'. With a start, Julius realised that this was an expression he'd seen on Subaru before.

Maybe Julius was wrong. Maybe this was actually Subaru and not Reinhard.

"Subaru...?" Julius tried.

Maybe-Subaru Maybe-Reinhard nodded, slower and then faster. "Yes," he said. "I—no."

He stopped and stared. "I'm Reinhard," he said slowly.

Julius cast a nervous look up and down the corridor. *I don't know when more of those cultists will be coming. They're the same cultists as before, aren't they? The Ninth Tail.*

His ears were twitching and the feeling was making him even more nervous in its unfamiliarity. "Alright, Reinhard," Julius said, still attempting a soothing tone. He stalled. *I need to know what's wrong, but—we have to move.*

"I'm Reinhard," Reinhard repeated. He grabbed Julius' hands suddenly. "Subaru told me something."

"Did he," Julius said, turning to look up and down the corridor again.

"Look at me, Julius," Reinhard snarled, and Julius flinched. "Don't you dare fucking forget about me."

—*what?*

That phrase was so viscerally *not Reinhard* that Julius was rocking back before he could stop himself. His ears were pinned all the way back and his tail was lashing and Julius couldn't even care because he couldn't look away.

Reinhard stared back at him. No, was this Subaru? Reinhard would never say anything like that.

"No," said Reinhard or Subaru, shaking his head and looking away. "No, no, no, that wasn't me. That was not me. That wasn't—"

Julius cleared his throat. He needed to get them moving. "Who are you?" he asked.

"I'm..." Reinhard or Subaru blinked. "I'm Reinhard," he said confidently.

"Reinhard," Julius said. "Where are you?"

"Kidnapped by...." Reinhard blinked, focusing on Julius. "Kidnapped by Petel... By the Ninth Tail."

"Right," Julius confirmed with a nod. *He seems to be gaining coherence.* "Reinhard, will you work with me to get out of here?"

Reinhard's eyes went unfocused again. "What about Rem?" he asked.

"Rem?" Julius echoed, helpless. *Rem was one of the victims of the White Whale, right...? No, Subaru said that she was someone important, but no one could remember her.* "She's not here right now."

Reinhard looked around to the floor. "Oh," he said, surprised. "You're right. She's not."

Reinhard was starting to drift away again.

Julius hissed, catlike. His tail lashed once. He was going to have to get Reinhard up and moving and then navigate out of this place.

He looked back down at Reinhard, biting his tongue. *How the hell am I meant to do that if he's completely out of it?*

Looking around the room, he saw the two pools of blood covering the floor, while two lifeless corpses began to rot on the floor. His eyes fell to the one he jumped on earlier, biting his neck.

He recalled the enormous feats of strength Felix's body is capable of. *Wait, if I'm that strong...*

He looks back at Rein...- Subaru? No, he said he was Reinhard. But he acts so much like Subaru?...

He looks at Rein-baru, and approaches him. Once more asking him if he'll stand up, only to be responded with silence, he wrapped his arms around Rein-baru's waist and lifted him over his shoulder.

Now holding Rein-baru in a fireman's carry, he opened the door and entered the hallway. Deciding to go left, because that felt like the lucky direction, he began his long walk.

It wasn't long before he felt his ears twitch. Something felt ever so wrong. He turned around, seeing if something was following him. Seeing an empty corridor, he turned back round to where he was going.

His eyes widened as he visibly flinched. In front of him a dozen of the cloaked men stood. They all possessed daggers, each completely identical to one another. One could even think that they were clones.

He turned around abruptly, getting ready to run. But even more of the blue and white cloaked men covered his flank.

He hissed realising he was cornered. He had nowhere to go, as these people covered both exits. It was then that it occurred to him that he'd recognised these cloaks. He suddenly recalled his misadventure with the Ninth Tail.

Could they be looking for.. Revenge?... Could they be the ones who swapped us?

He was snapped out of his daze when suddenly one of them charged forward to him with his dagger pointing forward. If he didn't move, the dagger would surely stab him straight in the neck.

He leaned backwards, falling down to the ground. Trying his best to lift his legs into the air, he kicked his feet into the mafia member's stomach. Using the momentum of his thrust, he was able to guide him through the air, making him fly towards the other cloaked men.

Julius quickly got back up, leaving Rein-baru on the floor. He took the dagger out of his dress, getting ready for the fight of his life. A feeling that he never felt before took over his chest. He knew he had no way of winning this, and he felt scared.

Absolutely terrified even, but somehow that didn't deter him. He felt fearful, sure, but he also never felt so motivated in his life. Is this how it feels to die as a soldier on the battlefield?

Just as he was about to take initiative and start his attack, he could hear rumbling in the ceiling above him.

Not even a second later, a large hole appeared in the ceiling, covering one side of the cloaks in debris. The dust cleared after a few seconds, allowing him to see three figures jump down from the rather big hole they made.

Subaru, in Reinhard's body, Felix, in Julius's body, and Wilhelm all landed on the debris. They wielded their weapons, ready for battle.

"I do hope that we're not late." Subaru said in the most Reinhard accent he could manage.

And then a grin formed on his face. He dropped the accent, letting his Subarese take over. "Cause holy fuck, I wanna try this body out."

***Chapter 6*: Finale**

What even is life anymore? What was it to begin with? Someone will tell you that it's the opposite of dying. And that you only live once. But when death is a regular day for you, can you even call that living?

Having memories forced into your brain is.. Rather painful. Not as bad as being stabbed, mind you. But it has been the source of quite a migraine.

Being left in a cave for hours, whilst your only companion slowly crawls towards you after having their limbs twisted to the point of snapping any bones, or muscle, or whatever lies inside. He was a knight, not an anatomist.

Being forced to live through another person's exact thoughts though... that was confusing. A new experience, sure. But no he wasn't quite sure which part of him was Reinhard and which part was Subaru.

And he wasn't quite sure which part of him, was the real him. At first he thought he was definitely Reinhard. But now he's not quite sure. When he looks at Julius, he has the urge to punch him square in the face.

But that isn't something Reinhard would do, and that is what confuses him. Another thing about switching bodies is that everything is very different. For example, he zoned out a lot more in Subaru's body.

He only really snapped out of his daze when something heavy hit the floor in front of him.

His eyes shot towards it, seeing a now-headless white cloak. His mouth hung open, and he felt the urge to throw up.

What is this what is this what is th-.. Where's Rem-I need Rem-I need Rem-Rem-Rem-REM

Subaru grinned as he held a white cloak by his neck with ease. Lifting him into the air, he aimed him down the corridor. "Now's let us see just how strong these arms are!"

He jerked his arm and shoulder backwards, then quickly pushed them forward, letting go of the white cloak at the end of his swing.

It resulted in the poor man being sent through the endless hallway at Mach 5. So fast that Subaru was almost certain his clothes were this close to catching fire. He could smell smoke.

Subaru grinned, being in the Sword Saint's body was one of the coolest experiences of his life. He couldn't help but feel sorry for Reinhard though, being trapped in his body must kinda suck.

They'd switch back soon enough, though, so it was fine. Speaking of Reinhard, he appeared to be completely out of it. Oops. That was definitely Subaru's fault.

Not much I can do about it now . Subaru punched another white cloak and resisted the urge to cackle maniacally.

"Subaru!" shouted a voice, and Subaru turned to see Julius. *Woah, why's his mouth all bloody?*

"Hey, Julius!" Subaru shouted back, punching yet another white cloak in the face and then doing a backflip just because he could. Then he struck a pose and shot finger guns in Julius' general direction.

"Focus," Julius snapped. They had good timing, and it was clear that they were going to win the fight now that Subaru in Reinhard's body, Felis in Julius' body, and Wilhelm showed up. *Still, we need to deal with whatever's going on with Reinhard as soon as possible.*

One of the cultists was moving faster than the others, so Subaru followed Julius' instructions and focused on that one. *Man, I wouldn't be able to see this guy if I weren't in Reinhard's body!* Luckily Subaru was in Reinhard's body, so with one well-placed kick he punted the guy through the wall.

Then he turned and looked for his next target.

There...were none. Huh.

Subaru had torn through quite a few, and Wilhelm and Felis had dealt with the rest. Wilhelm was holding one at swordpoint and appeared to be interrogating him.

Subaru turned to look at Reinhard, who was trembling on the floor. *I should probably go check on him first.*

Julius stopped Subaru before he could kneel down to talk to Reinhard. "What happened to him?" Julius asked, terse.

Subaru shifted awkwardly. "Body swap stuff?" he tried.

"Felis and I haven't experienced anything of the sort," Julius said, severe.

Subaru chuckled nervously. "Don't worry about it." He looks down at his hands, covered in blood. His grin suddenly fell from his face as if what he did only just caught up to him.

Rein-baru shivered, the blood from around him seemed to trigger some PTSD that he wasn't entirely sure he had.

Subaru sighed, after having used his Divine Protection of Empathy, he realised his best course of action would be to use the Divine Protection of Getting The Hell Out Here

Sadly, such a divine protection didn't exist. And considering they had to make a 50 foot hole in the ground just to get inside, Subaru doubted they could take the same route.

Of course, Subaru could just jump up, due to him having the Divine Protection of Super Jumps, but the others didn't. And he'd rather everyone stay together than leave one person to fend for themselves on two occasions.

He sighed, and scrolled through his extensive list of Divine Protections, looking for one to help him out.

Meanwhile, the other four had regrouped. Wilhelm knelt down in front of Reinhard, a pool of vomit surrounding him like a moat.

He put his hand on his shoulder, trying to get Reinhard to look at him. It worked, as Reinhard's eyes snapped towards him. He could see the fear in his eyes as he stared into them.

—*Is he afraid of me?* Wilhelm withdrew his hand. "Reinhard?" he tried.

Felis cleared his throat. "Perhaps someone else should do this," he said pointedly. Reinhard didn't react to his voice.

Because you have no right to comfort him. Wilhelm stood up and backed away. His heart panged at the sight of Reinhard, curled up and helpless. He wanted to reach out and help him.

It occurred to him suddenly that he might only be feeling this was because Reinhard was in Subaru's body—because he was conflating the two, and so could be sympathetic.

Wilhelm reeled. *Am I really that unable to be sympathetic to my own grandchild?* He raised one hand to his forehead. "I'm going to check the hideout further," Wilhelm announced.

Felis cast him a distracted glance. "Stay safe," he said. He turned back to Reinhard. "Subaru," he said, still facing Reinhard, "what happened?"

"Why are you assuming this is my fault?" Subaru still minced over Reinhard. *Ew, that's basically my vomit. Oh wait, I'm used to seeing my own vomit.*

"We're not having these problems," Felis pointed out.

Subaru frowned at him and resisted his normal urge to banter at Julius' face. "Fine," he said. "Move over."

He crouched down in front of Reinhard. "Reinhard," he said.

"Reinhard?" Reinhard repeated.

"Oh, I didn't think this whole *having the other person's face* thing through," Subaru realised.

Felis hissed and it sounded unnatural with Julius' voice. "Move over," he commanded tersely, shoving at Subaru's arm. Subaru made use of his Divine Protection of Not Getting Weird Stuff on his clothes this time and just walked through the vomit.

"Reinhard, look at me," Felis commanded. "Who are you?"

"I'm Reinhard," Reinhard said slowly. He blinked. Things were slowly coming back into focus. The pungent smell of vomit was stabbing into his nose, into his mind. "Why do you keep asking me this?"

"What do you remember?" Felis asked. His hair fell in his face and he moved it out of the way agitatedly.

Reinhard blinked again. "Ah," he said, his gaze falling on Subaru. The dissolution of his identity was lapping at his consciousness again, great waves of confusion and fuzz and disorientation and fear, rocking him back and forth.

Felis leaned back. Reinhard had started to drift away again. *We need to switch our bodies back.*

Julius cleared his throat. "I know it may be presumptuous of me to ask this," he started, "but have you discovered a way to switch our bodies back?"

Felix's face lit up, a grin meeting his eyes shone through any despair that may reside in their minds. "Yes, I have, in fact!"

Subaru smiled, sighing in relief. "Oh thank god." Although he was slightly disappointed at not being able to stay in Reinhard's body just a few seconds more, he did miss his old body. A lot less muscle to carry, a lot easier to move.

"Well, what is this way?" Julius asked, raising a brow.

Felix cleared his throat and stood straight, as if giving a speech to the masses. "Well. Since Subaru made it clear to me that memories are a reaction of electrical currents in brain cells, they are in fact an entity. Which means! Drum roll please," He started patting his legs to create clapping noises, using the Subaruism that he had been taught.

"Yang magic is perfectly capable of duplicating memories, and then just deleting the original ones. Meaning we didn't actually swap or anything, it's just that our memories and consciousness think we did!"

Julius and Subaru went deadily quiet, the latter's smile dropping. A long and awkward pursued it.

"Well... I'm having an existential crisis." Subaru scratched his chin.

Julius ignored him and spoke up. "So, we need to swap our memories.. What, again?"

Felix nodded, rubbing the stubble that started to grow on his face. "I'm sure a certain very talented Yin magician could find some way to reverse a Yang spell. Because I don't really know any Yang spirits."

Subaru nodded. "I guess Beako would be the best one to ask."

Julius stared at the two as if they just rolled in from Stupidtown. "Felix. You do realise, you're currently contracted with my spirits, right?"

"Yeah, what of it?" He was sure that if he was in cat form, his tail would stand tall whilst his ears fold over.

"What exactly are my spirit's affinities, Felix?" Julius rubbed his eyes tiredly.

"Uhh. Fire, Earth, Wind, Water, Yin and Ya-... Oh!" Felix grinned.

Subaru chuckled, rolling his eyes. "That is true, but I do fear that the spirit may be too weak for it." He bit his lip.

Julius nodded in agreement. "I guess we should see Great Spirit Beatrice, she may be able boost his power, or something of the sorts."

Subaru nodded, glancing sideways at Reinhard, who was still laying against the wall. He pointed his finger upwards. "TO THE LIBRARY!"

And using the Divine Protection of Time Skips, the crew got out the lair, Wilhelm and Reinhard in tow, and entered the library.

"Betty hasn't yet discovered the solution to your problem, I suppose," Beatrice announced, not looking up from her

book.

"No worries, Beako!" Subaru bounded over to her, grinning. "We've got you a roadmap, and you just need to follow it!"

Beatrice looked up, accurately directing Subaru's metaphor. "You've already found a solution, in fact?" Her relief was clear, as much as she tried to hide it. "That was quick, I suppose."

"Time crunches'll do that to ya," Subaru dismissed. "I'll let Felis explain."

Felis nodded and Subaru stealthily activated the Divine Protection of Skipping Over the Exposition.

"—so all you need to do is copy our current memories, then delete them from our non-original and insert them into our original bodies," Felis concluded.

Beatrice nodded slowly. She was fairly certain she understood that. She resisted the urge to request a diagram and instead raised her hand. "Anything you want to do before I swap you back, I suppose?"

The group—with the exception of Reinhard, who was staring confusedly at Beatrice, and Wilhelm, who was staring confusedly at Reinhard—exchanged glances and then shook their heads.

Beatrice nodded. "Right," she said, and then everything went dark.

Reinhard opened his eyes.

There was a smoothness over his emotions, now, and a distance to his thoughts—a familiar kind. It felt just a little off, but still it was an improvement. He was Reinhard, now, and there was no confusion there.

"Reinhard," said a familiar voice, and he sat up.

"Hello, Subaru," Reinhard greeted. He looked around the library. Julius and Felis were standing and talking quietly in the corner, and Wilhelm was hovering by the door.

"Our switchback took a bit longer," Subaru said, following Reinhard's gaze. He cleared his throat. "For, you know, *reasons*."

"Betty doesn't know," Beatrice grumbled from her spot by Subaru's knee. She was holding his hand and looking at Reinhard speculatively.

"Reasons," Reinhard echoed. Those foreign memories edged their way back into his mind, shifting his thought process oh-so-slightly sidewise. *Subaru's memories*. They didn't make sense, yet Reinhard knew without a doubt that they were Subaru's memories.

What had Subaru said right before Reinhard was taken?

"Subaru," Reinhard said purposefully, "I believe there is something we must discuss."

Subaru nodded. He stood up and squeezed Beatrice's hand. "Yeah."

"What exactly is this Retur-" Reinhard started to speak, but time froze. A familiar sensation - or lack thereof - overcame him.

A black hand with purple outlines appeared from a crack in spacetime, snaking itself towards his heart. He knew this situation all too well, and he braced himself for an overwhelming pain.

Yet it never came. Although he couldn't close his eyes, he did the equivalent of opening his eyes - time being frozen and all - to test the waters.

It was then that he had noticed he wasn't in the same spot, the hand was a few feet in front of him and had stopped in the air. Looking around by just moving his eyes, he discerned that he had in fact moved a short distance backwards.

Did my Divine Protections activate? Did I just dodge without intending to?

The hand in front of him balled into a fist, as if crushing something. It occurred to him that the hand had no form of vision or quite possibly sensation. *Maybe it just knows the location when it appears, but has no way of navigating afterwards?*

The hand retracted back into the white glowing crack that appeared beforehand, when time first froze. Once gone, the crack disappeared and time resumed.

A massive crack of wind split the eardrums of everyone in the room, moving at an unmeasurable speed can do that. The disturbance of the air was so strong that the doors of the library were knocked off its hinges.

The friction of his movements created heat, a lot of it too. In fact, it was so hot, that in Reinhard's perception of time - witnessing speed at one millionth of a second - it only looked like a lightstone turning on.

It quickly developed into something worse, far worse. When an element gets simply too hot, it turns into plasma. Such plasma reacts negatively with the atmosphere and explodes.

Subaru, Julius, Beatrice, Wilhelm and Felix didn't even perceive it, as it happened far too fast for the human brain to fathom. But the capital of Lugunica, and its surrounding twelve miles, was completely wiped off the map.

And that was why Subaru jumped forward as soon as he felt himself again. He'd looped, that much was sure, the moment Reinhard had opened his mouth Subaru knew that the timeline was doomed.

Time appeared to be right before Reinhard said those fateful words, he's been getting really lucky with these save points isn't he? Maybe Satella has been watching, and wanted them to swap back as soon as he could.

Reinhard was speechless, what exactly did he just witness? A white light had consumed the entire room within the matter of microseconds. What caused that hand to appear?

He reflected on the last time he had said it, the hand appearing. He was in Subaru's body, right after saying... Ohhhh, right.

"Whatever you do, do NOT say the words Return by Death!"

Reinhard looked down at Subaru, who's eyes seemed to plead him to stay quiet. Reinhard nodded, taking Subaru's hand off his mouth. "I apologise, I had forgotten about that."

Subaru's eyes widened, but then he sighed in relief. "So you do remember, that's a good thing."

Everyone else in the room looked at the duo in bewilderment, but Beatrice felt a fraction of her contractor's emotions due to their contract. She didn't know what was happening, but she felt happy and relieved.

"I do believe we should discuss this somewhere private, Subaru." Reinhard suggests, placing his hand on his hips.

Subaru lets his arms fall to his sides, nodding silently. "I do believe that would be best." He said, mocking Reinhard's posh and noble accent.

"Well, that was in fact a peculiar adventure." Wilhelm spoke up. "Julius, do try to take care of Felix's body."

Julius chuckled, scratching the back of his head awkwardly. "Yes, I suppose that would be best."

"Hopefully this won't happen again. It was weird, having our Souls Swapped." Felix sighed tiredly.

"Yeah, honestly it sounds like something out of a book." Subaru reasoned, scratching his chin.

Beatrice sighed, looking towards you, the reader. "How hopeless these people are, I suppose. Please leave kudos and a comment below, Turacoverdin and LittleRunningDemon worked hard on this, in fact."

Reinhard looked at her. "What did you just say, Lady Beatrice?"

"Nothing, I suppose."